

REMARKS

In response to the restriction requirement set forth in the Office Action of January 14, 2003, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the above-captioned patent application in view of the following election and remarks:

In the above-noted Office Action, the Examiner withdrew a previously issued restriction requirement and has additionally found the application contained three distinct inventions: Group I (claims 1-12, 17-30, 36-48, 58-65, and 67-80); Group II (claims 49-57, and previously cancelled claims 13-16 and 66); and Group III (claims 31-35).

Applicants hereby elect Group I (claims 1-12, 17-30, 36-48, 58-65, and 67-80) for prosecution on the merits. This election is made without traverse. Claims 31-35 and 49-57 designated by the Examiner as Groups III and II are now cancelled from the Application. Claims 1-12, 17-30, 36-48, 58-65, and 67-80 remain in their as-filed form.

In response to the election of species requirement for Group I, Applicant elects Species I (the embodiment of Figure 2a) for prosecution on the merits. This election is made without traverse.

In response to the election of subspecies requirement for Group I, Applicant elects subspecies A (a ligament having a conformable portion) for prosecution on the merits. This election is made without traverse.

The Examiner has indicated that claims 1, 2, 5-12, 17, 18, 24, 29, 30, 36-48, 58-63 and 67-72 are readable on Species I.

Independent claims 1, 17, 18, 30, 36, 63, 73 and 77 each appear to recite a ligament having a conformable portion (subspecies A). In addition, dependent claims 42 and 72 also each appear to recite a ligament having a conformable portion.

Accordingly, claims 1, 2, 5-12, 17, 18, 30, 36-39, 42, 63 and 72 appear to be readable upon Species I, subspecies A.

Applicants believe that inventorship remains the same as in the as-filed case.

In addition, please provide any extensions of time which may be necessary and charge any fees which may be due to Deposit Account No. 10-0750, but do not include any payment of issue fees.

Should there be any remaining or further questions, the Examiner is requested to place contact the undersigned directly.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas M. DiMauro

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Thomas M. DiMauro
Attorney for Applicants
Reg. No. 35,490
DePuy AcroMed
325 Paramount Drive
Raynham, MA 02767
(508) 880-8401